

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-13 (Canceled)

14. (currently amended): A multi-piece mold as claimed in Claim 24, wherein ~~the glass tube is a hollow cylindrical glass tube; and wherein the heat source includes distribution channels through which gas may be distributed with gas jets emanating along the inner surface of at least one of the pieces.~~

Claim 15 (canceled)

16. (currently amended): A multi-piece mold as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the distribution channels within the at least one piece is are coupled to tubing coupling the distribution channels to a gas fitting to which a source of gas may be attached.

17. (previously presented): A multi-piece mold as claimed in Claim 14, wherein ejection of gas occurs at several points along the inner surface of at least one piece.

18. (previously presented): A multi-piece mold as claimed in Claim 14, wherein at least one of said pieces includes ventilation channels extending between its inner and outer surfaces to enable air and gases trapped between outer walls of the tube and the inner surfaces of the mold to escape.

Claims 19-22 (canceled)

23. (original): A multi-piece mold as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the pieces of the mold are formed of material capable of operating at temperatures in excess of the melting point of glass and without contaminating the glass.

24. (currently amended): A multi-piece mold for shaping an end portion of a glass tube having an opening, said mold comprising:

~~two elongated sleeve-like side pieces which, when joined, encircle a form a cavity which can enclose an end portion of the a tube for shaping the tube; and~~

~~an end plug piece including an end cap and a cylindrical stub positioned at a free end of said end plug and having a diameter less than a diameter of said end plug cap, said stub being configured for insertion into the opening of the tube for allowing rotational movement of the tube about said cylindrical stub for controlling the inner diameter of the tube; and~~

wherein at least one of said side pieces of the mold includes a heat source, formed within the one piece, for heating the tube to render it malleable.

25. (original): A multi-piece mold as claimed in claim 24 wherein the heat source includes heating gas distribution channels, formed within the one piece of said multi-piece mold, with said distribution channels formed to eject gas along an inner surface of said one piece of said multi-piece mold.

26. (original): A multi-piece mold as claimed in Claim 24 wherein said tube is an exhaust tube shaped to mate with a starter tube, such that the exhaust and starter tubes can be joined easily at their mating ends.

Claims 27-30 (canceled)

31. (currently amended): Apparatus for shaping ~~a selected~~ an end portion of a glass tube having an opening, said apparatus comprising:

~~a support means for holding the tube and for imparting rotational motion to the tube; a multi-piece mold having one piece in which is formed a heat distribution source, said mold having two side pieces for imparting an oblate cone like a substantially conical shape to a~~

~~selected an end portion of the tube while leaving an opening for accessing the opening of the tube, at its selected end one of said side pieces having a heat distribution source formed therein, and wherein said mold includes an end plug and having an end cap and a cylindrical stub positioned at a free end of said end plug and having a diameter less than a diameter of said end plug cap, said stub being~~ configured for insertion in the opening of the tube for allowing rotational movement of the tube about the end plug for controlling the inner diameter of the tube at its end surface; and

an actuatable mechanical holding means for holding the multi piece mold, including means for holding the one piece in which is formed a heat distribution source, in proximity to the selected portion of the tube for heating the selected tube portion to render it malleable, and for selectively applying the mold pieces to the tube for shaping the selected portion of the tube.

32. (original): An apparatus as claimed in Claim 31, wherein the apparatus includes temperature sensing means for sensing the temperature of the selected portion of the tube; and wherein the apparatus includes means responsive to a signal from the temperature sensing means for applying the mold pieces to the selected portion of the tube.

Claim 33 (canceled)

34. (currently amended): An apparatus as claimed in Claim 31, ~~wherein further comprising means for supplying positive air pressure is supplied to the tube at its unselected end, while the selected end portion of the tube is being heated and molded, to cause the tube to conform to the shape being imparted by the mold.~~

Claim 35 (canceled)

36. (original): An apparatus as claimed in Claim 31 wherein the apparatus includes a temperature sensor for sensing the temperature of a selected portion of the tube for producing an

actuating signal coupled to the actuatable mechanical holding means when the temperature of the selected end portion is such that the tube is malleable.

37. (original): The apparatus as claimed in Claim 36 wherein the heat distribution source functions as a torch and wherein said temperature sensor functions to control the intensity of the torch.

38. (withdrawn): A method for shaping a selected end of a glass tube comprising the steps of:

positioning the tube within a support means;
heating the selected end of the tube with one piece of a multi-piece mold, where the one piece contains a heat source, until the selected end of the tube becomes malleable; and
applying the multi-piece mold to the selected end of the tube when the selected end becomes malleable for shaping the selected end the tube.

39. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in Claim 38 wherein the heating of the selected end of the tube is controlled by a temperature sensor to control application of heat via one piece of the mold.

40. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in Claim 39 further including the step of supplying a signal from a temperature sensor to a microcontroller coupled to the heat source to control the amount of heat (gas) applied to the tube.

41. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in claim 39 further including the step of supplying a signal from the temperature sensor to a microcontroller to control application of heat to the tube and the application of the multi-piece mold to the tube.

42. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in Claim 38 further including the step of applying positive air pressure to the unselected end of the glass tube.

43. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in Claim 38 further including the step of rotating the tube in a controllable manner, while the tube is being heated.

44. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in Claim 38 further including the step of biasing the heated tube end to conform to the multi-piece mold; and removing the mold from the conformed tube after a predetermined time period.

45. (withdrawn): A method for shaping a selected end of a hollow cylindrical tube, comprising the steps of:

positioning the tube within a support means;

placing a mold containing a heat source in close proximity to the selected end of the tube until the selected end segment of the tube becomes malleable; and

applying the mold to the selected end of the tube when the tube becomes malleable for shaping the tube to conform to the mold.

46. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in claim 45 including the step of sensing the condition of the tube section being heated.

47. (withdrawn): A method as claimed in Claim 46 including a control system responsive to sensing the condition of the tube section being heated for then applying all the mold pieces to the tube.

48. (new): A multi-piece mold for shaping an end portion of a glass tube to form an exhaust tube which is fitted to a starter tube of an optical fiber preform, said multi-piece mold comprising:

two complementary side pieces having inner surfaces which, when joined, form a cavity which can enclose an end portion of a glass tube for shaping the tube, said cavity having a first cylindrical section, a second cylindrical section, and a conical section which tapers from said first cylindrical section down to said second cylindrical section, and

an end plug comprising an end cap and a cylindrical stub, said cylindrical stub having a first section with a first diameter which is smaller than the diameter of said end cap and a second section with a second diameter which is smaller than said first diameter, said cylindrical stub being receivable in said second cylindrical section of said cavity to shape an inside surface of said end portion of the glass tube so that said end portion has a first region with said first diameter, a second region with said second smaller diameter, and a shoulder separating said first and second end regions, whereby,

said end portion of said tube can snugly receive an end of a starter tube having an outside diameter which is slightly smaller than said first diameter and an inside diameter which is substantially the same as said second diameter to form a preform having an exhaust tube which is centered with respect to said starter tube and having an inside surface with a smooth transition between said exhaust tube and said starter tube.